A DETECTOR FOR DETECTING TIMING IN A DATA FLOW

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the field of data-transmission networks, and more particularly, to a synchronous data transmission, particularly in

5 accordance with a synchronous digital hierarchy (SDH) standard. More particularly, the present invention relates to a detector for detecting timing in a data flow.

Background of the Invention

10 The synchronous digital hierarchy (SDH) standard prescribes the following predetermined transmission rates: 51.84 Mbit/s (base rate), 155.52 Mbit/s, 622.08 Mbit/s, etc. All of the prescribed transmission rates are whole multiples of the base

15 rate.

The G.703 recommendation issued by the CCITT committee of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) prescribes the electrical and physical characteristics of the hierarchy digital interfaces to

20 be used for interconnecting components of digital networks which conform to the SDH standard. In particular, recommendation G.703 prescribes the type of data coding to be used for each transmission rate. For example, for 155.52 Mbit/s transmission/receiving

interfaces, coded mark inversion (CMI) coding should be used. These interfaces are also known as bidirectional or transceiver interfaces.

CMI coding is a coding with two levels, A1 <
5   A2, in which a binary 0 is encoded to have the two levels A1 and A2 in succession, each for a time equal to half of the bit-time. A binary 1 is encoded by one of the two levels A1, A2 which is maintained throughout the bit-time. The two levels A1, A2 are alternated for
10   successive binary 1s. The encoded CMI signal is therefore characterized in that, in the middle of the bit-time, there are no transitions or there are transitions with leading edges. Conversely, at the beginning of the bit-time, there may be either upward
15   or downward transitions.

In general, in data-transmission networks there is a need to synchronize a component of the network with a data flow coming from a remote unit. This need arises, for example, in interfaces which are
20   associated with digital circuits for processing data received and/or to be transmitted and which, typically, operate on data which is encoded differently. For example, the data may be coded in accordance with non-return-to-zero (NRZ) coding.

25   During receiving, the interface therefore has to receive a signal containing CMI-encoded data from a remote analog interface by a transmission/receiving channel formed, for example, by a pair of coaxial cables. The interface must also recognize the data,
30   convert it into NRZ, and supply it to the digital circuits for processing. During transmission, the interface receives NRZ-encoded data from the digital processing circuits, recognizes the data, converts it into CMI, and provides the data on the transmission/
35   receiving channel.

Timing detectors are used for synchronizing a component of the transmission network, such as an interface of the type described above for a flow of data arriving from a remote unit, for example. Due to

5 the characteristics of CMI coding which, as stated, also has transitions in the middle of the bit-time, known timing detectors require local clock signals with a frequency of twice the frequency of the flow of data arriving, i.e., twice the data rate, to be able to

10 produce the two transitions within the bit-time which are typical of CMI coding. In the example of a 155.52 Mbit/s data flow corresponding to a bit-time of 6.43 ns, the local clock signals have a frequency of 311.04 MHz.

15 **Summary of the Invention**

In view of the foregoing background, it is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a detector for detecting timing in a data flow which does not require local clock signals with a frequency

20 greater than that of the data flow itself.

According to the present invention, this object is achieved by a synchronous bidirectional interface according to Claim 1.

Brief Description of the Drawings

25 The characteristics and the advantages of the present invention will become clearer from the following detailed description of an embodiment thereof, illustrated purely by way of a non-limiting example in the appended drawings, in which:

30 Figure 1 is a block diagram of a circuit comprising a timing detector for detecting the timing in a data flow according to the present invention;

Figure 2 is a block diagram of the timing detector according to the present invention;

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram of one embodiment of the timing detector illustrated in Figure 2;

Figure 4 is a graph illustrating the operating principle of the timing detector according to the present invention;

Figure 5 is a block diagram of a data-transmission network including a timing detector according to the present invention;

Figure 6 is a block diagram of a receiving/ transmission interface included in the network illustrated in Figure 4; and

Figure 7 is a block diagram in greater detail of two functional blocks of the interface illustrated in Figure 6, one of which includes a timing detector according to the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

With reference to Figure 1, a circuit for detecting timing in a data flow BK comprises a circuit 1 for generating a local clock signal CK. The local clock signal CK is supplied to a circuit 2 to obtain, from the signal, four local timing signals Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 having the same period T. This period is equal or substantially equal to the bit-time of the data flow BK. The signals Q1-Q4 are out of phase with one another by T/4. The signal Q2 is delayed by T/4 relative to the signal Q1. The signal Q3 is delayed by T/4 relative to the signal Q2, and by T/2 relative to the signal Q1. That is, the signal Q3 is in quadrature relative to the signal Q1. The signal Q4 is delayed by T/4 relative to the signal Q3.

The four signals Q1-Q4 are supplied to a
timing detector 3 which also receives the data flow BK,
the timing of which is to be detected. The detector 3
generates a signal +/- which is supplied to the circuit

5   2. A first level of the signal +/- indicates to the
circuit 2 that the signal Q1 is delayed relative to the
timing of the data flow BK and should be advanced.
Conversely, a second level of the signal +/- indicates
to the circuit 2 that the signal Q1 is advanced

10 relative to the timing of the data flow BK and should
be delayed.

    If the signal Q1 is advanced or delayed, the
signals Q2-Q4 are also consequently advanced or
delayed. Their delays relative to the signal Q1 are

15 kept constant. Once the signal Q1 is synchronized with
the timing of the data flow BK, it can be used by other
circuit blocks to perform processing on the data flow
BK. An example of using signal Q1 is provided below.

    Figure 2 shows a block diagram of the circuit

20 3 of Figure 1. The timing detector comprises a
sampling circuit 100 which samples the four signals Q1-
Q4 in synchronization with the leading edges of the
signal BK, and supplies sampled signals Q1C-Q4C to a
decoding circuit 101 which decodes the states of the

25 sampled signals Q1C-Q4C to activate the signal +/-.

    An implementation of the circuit of Figure 2,
which is in no way limiting, is shown in Figure 3. The
circuit comprises four D-type flip-flops FF1-FF4 which
receive the signals Q1-Q4 at their respective data

30 inputs D, whereas their sampling inputs receive in
common the data flow BK. A reset signal RES is also
supplied to the reset inputs of the flips-flops FF1-FF4
for re-establishing certain starting conditions.

    The output Q1', the negated output Q2N' of

35 the flip-flops FF1 and FF2, the output Q3', and the

negated output Q4N' of the flip-flops FF3, FF4 are supplied to an AND-NOR-INVERTER logic gate 4. The logic complement of the output of the logic gate 4 forms the signal +/-.

5   The circuit of Figure 3 performs the logic function:

$$+/- = Q1' \text{ AND } Q2N' \text{ OR } Q3' \text{ AND } Q4N'$$

After the flip-flops have been loaded with the values applied to their inputs, Q1', Q2N', Q3', Q4N' are

10   respectively equal to Q1, Q2N, Q3, Q4N.

Since, one of the signals Q1 and Q3 and one of the signals Q2 and Q4 is always complementary to the respective other signal, the circuit of Figure 3 has the following truth table:

15

Q4	Q3	Q2	Q1	+/-
0	0	1	1	0
0	1	1	0	1
1	0	0	1	1
1	1	0	0	0

20   The operating principle of the above-described timing detector will now be explained with reference to the timing graph of Figure 4. The data flow BK acts as a sampling signal for the flip-flops FF1-FF4. At the leading edges of the signal BK, the

25   logic states applied to the inputs D of the flip-flops FF1-FF4 are stored and supplied as outputs. Prior to the time instant t1, the four signals Q1-Q4 are assumed to be represented by the continuous lines. The signal Q1, which is to be synchronized with the timing of the

30   data flow BK, is advanced by Δt.

At the leading edge of the signal BK (time instant t1) which, in the example shown, is formed by the transition in the middle of the bit-time typical of a logic 0 signal. The states of the signals are Q1 =

5 1, Q2 = 0, Q3 = 0, and Q4 = 1. On the basis of the truth table given above, the above-mentioned states correspond to signal +/- = 1 which indicates to the circuit 2 that the signal Q1 is advanced and should be delayed.

10 The circuit 2 consequently provides for the signal Q1 and, correspondingly, for the signals Q2-Q4 to be delayed. The lines with single dots in Figure 4 indicate the edges of the signals Q1-Q4 as they would be if the circuit 2 did not intervene to delay them.

15 At the time instant t2 corresponding to the next leading edge of the signal BK which, in the example, is again the transition in the middle of a bit-period of a logic 0 signal. The signal Q1 is still advanced relative to the data flow BK. The flip-flops

20 FF1-FF4 sample and load the new states of the signals Q1-Q4. Since the new state coincides with the previous one, the signal +/- generated is again a 1, and the circuit 2 therefore once more provides for the signal Q1 and, consequently, for the signals Q2-Q4 to be

25 delayed. In Figure 4, the lines with double dots indicate the edges of the signals Q1-Q4 as they would be after the first intervention of the circuit 2.

The next leading edge of the signal BK at the time instant t3, which corresponds to a logic 1 signal,

30 is at the beginning of the bit-time. The flip-flops FF1-FF4 sample the new state of the signals Q1-Q4 which, on the basis of the truth table given above, again correspond to a logic 1 on the signal +/-. The four signals Q1-Q4 are therefore delayed again. At the

35 instant t3, the signals Q3 and Q4 are utilized for

locking onto the transition at the beginning of the
bit-time.

     The signals Q1 and Q3 are thus progressively
and dynamically kept in synchronization with the
5   leading edges of the signal BK. The synchronization is
both at the beginning and in the middle of the bit-
time. Locking with the timing of the data flow is thus
achieved. The signals Q1 and Q3 may be used by other
circuit blocks for synchronizing the blocks with the
10   timing of the data flow that is arriving. The signals
Q2 and Q4 may be used by the circuit blocks to perform
sampling of the data flow every half bit-time.

     An advantage of the timing detector according
to the present invention is that it does not require
15   local timing signals with a frequency of twice the bit
frequency of the data flow, the timing of which is to
be detected. The four signals Q1-Q4, which are out of
phase with one another by one quarter of the bit-time,
and all of the transitions of the CMI-coded signal with
20   leading edges may be used for synchronization. That
is, both the transitions at the beginning of the bit-
time (corresponding to logic 1 signals) and those in
the middle of the bit-time (corresponding to logic 0
signals) may be used. For example, the signals Q1 and
25   Q2 serve for locking with the transitions in the middle
of the bit-time, and the signals Q3 and Q4 serve for
locking with the transitions at the beginning of the
bit-time.

     Although in the example described, the four
30   signals Q1-Q4 have duty cycles equal to 50%. The use
of the four signals Q1-Q4 which are out of phase by one
quarter of the bit-time also enables the timing
detector to operate independently of the duty cycle of
the local timing signals Q1-Q4, and to be insensitive
35   to changes in the duty cycle of the signals Q1-Q4.

The following Figures 5-7 illustrate one possible application of the timing detector according to the present invention. Figure 5 shows schematically a data-transmission network, and in particular, a

5   network conforming to the synchronous digital hierarchy (SDH) standard. A bidirectional, synchronous interface 5, i.e., a transmission and receiving interface, receives digital data with CMI coding from a remote far end analog interface 7 on a first channel 6a, such as a

10   coaxial cable, for example.

The interface 5 in turn transmits a flow of digital data with CMI coding to the remote interface 7 on a second channel 6b also formed, for example, by a coaxial cable. For the interface 5, the channel 6a is

15   the receiving channel (RX), and the channel 6b is the transmission channel (TX). The interface 5 communicates with digital circuitry 8 for processing the data received and to be transmitted. Similarly, the remote interface 7 is associated with respective digital

20   circuitry 9.

As shown in Figure 6, the interface 5 comprises an equalizer circuit 10 for module and phase equalization of the signal received on the receiving channel RX. A signal RXEQ output from the equalizer

25   circuit 10 with CMI coding is supplied in parallel to a circuit 11 for recovering the timing signal during receiving, and to a decoding circuit 12. The decoding circuit 12 decodes the CMI-coded signal RXEQ into a corresponding signal RXNRZ with NRZ coding, for

30   example, that is suitable for supply to the digital circuitry 8.

The circuit 11 for recovering the timing signal during receiving also receives n timing signals CK1-CKn of equal period T, delayed relative to one

35   another by T/n, where T is the bit-time. In the case

of a 155.52 Mbit/s synchronous receiving/transmission interface, the bit-time is about 6.43 ns. For example, there are sixteen signals CK1-CKn, with a signal CKi+1 being delayed by T/16 relative to a signal CKi. The

5 signals CK1-CKn are generated by a delay locking circuit 13 or a delay locked loop (DLL) supplied with a clock signal CK of period T.

The clock signal CK is in turn generated by a local circuit 14 which generates a pair of differential

10 signals TXCKA, TXCKB conforming to the low voltage differential signal levels (LVDS) which are transformed into the signal CK conforming to the CMOS levels (e.g., 3.3 V or 5 V) by an LVDS/CMOS input buffer 15. The circuit 14 may, for example, be within the digital

15 circuitry 8 and is used to generate a pair of differential signals TXDA, TXDB representing the flow of bits to be transmitted.

The NRZ-coded signals TXDA, TXDB are transformed by the input buffer 15 into a signal DATA.

20 This signal DATA is still NRZ-coded and is transformed by an NRZ to CMI encoding circuit 16 synchronized with a timing signal CKTX. The timing signal is generated by the digital circuitry 8, and has a frequency equal to that of the signal CK, but a duty cycle which is

25 guaranteed to be substantially equal to 50%. A subsequent driver circuit 17 receives the signal from the encoding circuit 16 and provides the signal TX to be transmitted.

The circuit 11 for recovering the timing

30 signal during receiving generates a recovered timing signal CKR which is supplied to the decoding circuit 12. This circuit has to be synchronized with the flow of bits received to be able to decode the CMI signal to NRZ.

The signal RXNRZ and the signal CKR are also supplied to the digital circuitry 8 after their levels have been transformed from CMOS to LVDS by a CMOS/LVDS output buffer 18. This output buffer 18 is similar to the input buffer 15, and transforms the signal RXRNZ into a pair of differential signals RXDA, RXDB and the signal CKR into a pair of differential signals RXCKA, RXCKB.

Figure 7 shows the delay locking circuit 13 and the timing-signal recovery circuit 11 in greater detail. The circuit 13 is composed of a chain of n (e.g., n = 16) delay elements T1-Tn in cascade. These delay elements are controlled by a logic unit 19 which receives an output signal 20 from a phase comparator 21. The chain of delay elements T1-Tn form a controlled delay line. The overall delay introduced by the delay line T1-Tn is controlled so that the delay is equal to one period T of the signal CK.

The phase comparator 21 receives as inputs and compares the signal CK and the signal CKn at the output of the last delay element Tn of the chain. The output signal 20 of the phase comparator 21 depends on the phase difference detected between the signals CK and Ckn. The logic unit 19 controls the delay elements T1-Tn so that the delay introduced by each of delay elements is such that the signal CKn is in phase the with signal CK, less one period T.

The outputs CK1-CKn of the n delay elements T1-Tn are supplied to a selection circuit 22. The selection circuit 22 is basically a multiplier in the recovery circuit 11. Of the n (n = 16 in the example) input signals CK1-CKn, the multiplier 22 outputs four signals Q1-Q4 delayed relative to one another by T/4. The four signals Q1-Q4 are supplied to a timing detector 23 according to the present invention.

The timing detector 23 is of the type described above, which also receives the signal RXEQ with CMI coding. The timing detector 23 controls the selector 22 by the signal +/- as described above, in a

5 manner such that the signal Q1, which corresponds to the signal CKR that is supplied to the decoder 12, is synchronized with the data flow during receiving.

The clock signal is thus recovered from the signal received and can be supplied to the CMI to NRZ

10 decoding circuit 12. In other words, during receiving, the interface is synchronized with the flow of data received. The interface described has the advantage of requiring only one local timing signal, i.e., a single time base, which is used both for transmission and for

15 the recovery of the clock signal during receiving.

The timing of the interface both during receiving and during transmission is thus entrusted to a single time base. This eliminates the need to provide two local oscillators with frequencies close to

20 one another, and hence the risk of crosstalk between the two timing signals. A saving in terms of components and power absorbed is also achieved. Variations of and/or additions to the embodiments described above and illustrated may be provided,

25 without departing from the scope of the present invention.